

comes a notice of the smaller *Quiscalis* of the United States, three in number—one, *Q. æneus*, being described as new. The whole paper shows a very great amount of care in its execution.

XX.—*Letters, Announcements, &c.*

THE following letters, addressed "To the Editor of 'The Ibis,'" have been received:—

South African Museum, Cape Town.
October 9th, 1869.

SIR,—Permit me, in your pages, to thank Dr. Malmgren for his letter (*Ibis*, 1869, pp. 229, 230), which has only just reached me, and to point out that, of the birds to which he has called the attention of your readers as occurring in *South Africa*, and omitted from my book, *Budytes flavus* was hinted at (*B. S. Afr.* p. 119) and has since been noted by me (*Ibis*, 1869, p. 73) as found near Cape Town; for, as I then stated, the specimen obtained seems to be identical with examples of the European species. As to *Caprimulgus europæus*, I had heard of it, but could not satisfy myself as to the truth of the report; now, however, I can include it in any subsequent edition, as occurring at Natal, on the authority mentioned by your learned correspondent. But for the rest I must demur to receiving them as "South-African"—that is to say, as found within my narrowed limit, until the latitude and longitude of the places where they have occurred are particularized—the first mentioned by Dr. Malmgren being clearly beyond my range. Wahlberg unfortunately invented names and limits for the countries he visited, which are very different from those which we dwellers in South Africa recognize. His "Caffreland" is not our Caffreland, and extends I know not whither—as far as, if not far beyond Lake N'gami! A specimen therefrom, labelled by him from "Caffreland," may really come from a place many degrees beyond my limit, and I cannot include such an one in my list. It was a great pity that Wahlberg should have adopted this plan of giving old names to new boundaries; for it is calculated to make "confusion worse confounded."

Yours, &c.,

E. L. LAYARD.

Agra, Oct. 24, 1869.

SIR,—On a former occasion (Ibis, 1868, pp. 233–235) I pointed out the probable identity of *Saxicola capistrata*, Gould, and *S. picata*; I have now to inform you that the matter admits of no possible doubt. My museum contains, besides numerous typical examples of both forms, more than fifty specimens in the transition state, entirely connecting by almost imperceptibly small links the apparently wide gulf that lies between the opposite ends of the chain. As for the white extending further up the back in one form than in the other, the examination of the large series of specimens at once dispels it. The amount of white varies a good deal in individuals, but is not, *as a rule*, greater in extent in the one type than in the other. *S. capistrata* may without the slightest hesitation be remitted to the long list of synonyms which already unfortunately encumber this genus.

This is not, however, the only new *Saxicola* of Mr. Gould's that must disappear before the inexorable logic of facts. *S. montana* is nothing but the breeding-plumage of *S. atrogularis*. Be it distinctly understood that I offer no opinion as to the distinctness or identity of *S. deserti*, and *S. atrogularis*; but I do positively assert, with a complete series before me, that *S. atrogularis* and *S. montana* are different stages of plumage of one and the same species. One of the most remarkable features about the change of plumage in this species is, the gradual change of the axillaries and lesser wing-coverts, in some individuals, from a silky greyish-white to a deep jet-black; and it is not improbable that it is this which misled Mr. Gould into attributing specific value to these two differences. I have suspected this fact for some time, but have only this day had an opportunity of carefully comparing the large series of *S. atrogularis* that my museum contains, killed at all periods between the 1st of October and the 1st of May.

When we first see the bird in the Upper Punjab in October, it exactly corresponds to Mr. Gould's figure of *S. montana* (B. As. pt. xvii.), except that the rump in no specimen that I have seen is quite so pure a white as he figures it. It has always, even when the bird first visits us, a faint fulvous tinge; similarly the breast and lower parts are never quite so pale as

his lower right-hand figure would lead us to suppose. Probably in the breeding-season, amid the alpine tracts of the Himalayas, the plumage may in these respects be exactly as figured by Mr. Gould from Thibet examples. Later in the season the whole upper and under surface and rump grow dingier and more rufous; the black of the throat and sides of the head becomes dull, by the points of the feathers everywhere turning greyish-white. The white which at all times narrowly tips the greater under wing-coverts creeps, more or less, up the feathers; and greyish-white points appear on the tips of the lesser lower wing-coverts. The quills and upper wing-coverts are first narrowly and then more broadly edged with rufous-fawn. In some specimens killed in December and January, males as well as females, and these are possibly yearling birds, there is scarcely a trace of black visible on the chin and throat until the feathers are raised, and the black bases are clearly seen. In these same birds the wing-lining becomes almost entirely greyish-white; but even here, pushing aside the feathers, it will be seen that the basal portions are dusky, if not black. Some specimens do not undergo so great a change as others; and some may be shot at all times in the cold weather only slightly more rufous than the *montana*-form, and with but little, comparatively speaking, of the white tipping to the feathers of the throat and sides of the head. On the other hand, the typical mid-winter plumage is that represented in Mr. Gould's figure of *S. atrogularis* (B. As. pt. xvii.), with this one exception, that I have never yet seen a bird in the rufous-brown winter-plumage the black of whose chin and throat was quite so pure as Mr. Gould's plate represents. Of the innumerable specimens in this phase of plumage that I have seen, all had the feathers of these parts more or less tipped with fulvous-white.

This bird is very common in the upper portion of the Northwest Provinces, and throughout the Punjab. Fifty specimens may be seen in a single morning, each, so long as the cold weather lasts, perched solitary on the top of some stunted bush, every now and then fluttering the tail like a Redstart, flying off and seizing some insect in the air like a Fly-catcher (returning usually to the same perch), or darting down and devouring on

the ground some ant or beetle. In its various movements and habits it reminds one alternately of the Thrushes, the Redstarts, and the Fly-catchers.

S. montana may, like *S. capistrata*, be consigned to the synonymic limbo. Of course, with such very different-looking specimens before him, Mr. Gould was quite right to characterize them separately; but with a complete series of transitional forms before me, no doubt as to the identity of these at first sight clearly distinct types can exist.

We have in India two large species of Pipit, which have been hitherto, as I think, erroneously identified with two Abyssinian species. The one of these, well-figured by Dr. Jerdon in his 'Illustrations of Indian Ornithology' as *Anthus similis*, Jerd., has been subsequently identified by Mr. Blyth as *A. cinnamomeus*, Rüppell; this is essentially the form of Southern India, and, so far as I yet know, does not occur north of the Nerbudda. All the large Pipits of this type sent me from localities north of the Nerbudda, as well as all those procured in the Himalayahs where we have found them breeding, are referable to the second species, identified by Mr. Blyth with *A. sordidus*, Rüppell*.

With all deference to Mr. Blyth's superior knowledge, I submit that he is in error in both these identifications, or else that Rüppell failed to describe correctly, either in Latin or in his own German, the birds he had before him. First as to *A. cinnamomeus*, it will be seen from his descriptions in both languages (Neue Wirbelth. p. 103) that he distinctly sets forth as a leading feature that the upper surface is cinnamon-brown, whereas in *A. similis* (I have specimens from the Neilgherries, as well as Dr. Jerdon's figure, before me) there is not a trace of cinnamon in the brown of the upper surface. Next Rüppell insists on the point that both the exterior tail-feathers on each side are yellowish-white, the innermost of the two only having a portion of the inner web dusky-brown; but in *A. similis* even the external feather of all has a considerable portion of the inner web dusky-brown, the rest being reddish-white, and only a portion of the tip of the second exterior reddish-white. Thus in Rüppell's *A. cinnamomeus* the whole of the

* [Cf. Ibis, 1869, p. 437.—ED.]

outermost lateral feather is yellowish-white, while in *A. similis* only a part is reddish-white, a considerable portion of the inner web being dusky brown. Again in *A. cinnamomeus* the whole of the second exterior feather is yellowish-white, except a portion of the inner web, which is dusky brown, whereas in *A. similis* the whole is dusky brown, except a small patch of reddish-white at the tip. It is not, moreover, as if Rüppell had been careless, because, while describing the tail of *A. cinnamomeus* as above, he has described that of *A. sordidus* much as that of *A. similis* really is, showing that he noted carefully minor differences of this nature.

While, therefore, the Southern-Indian Pipit, *A. similis*, cannot be identified with *A. cinnamomeus*, still less can we identify it with *A. sordidus*; this latter, however, does in many respects appear to correspond closely enough with the bird of Northern India; but there is one essential difference which prevents its identification with this species also. Both our Indian species have well-marked *striæ* on the lower portion of the throat and breast; these *striæ* are described by Rüppell in both descriptions of *A. cinnamomeus*, while they are ignored in both descriptions of *A. sordidus*. Nay, more, could we suppose such a double oversight in the text, the figure of *A. sordidus* would settle the question; for this too shows that there are no such *striæ* in that species.

It follows, I think, that our Indian Pipits cannot properly be identified with either of the Abyssinian ones. They cannot be identified with *A. cinnamomeus* on account of the difference in the colour of the upper surface and tail, and they cannot be identified with *A. sordidus* from the entire absence of dark *striæ* and spots (well-marked in both our species) on the breast.

Our Southern bird therefore will stand as *Corydalla similis* (Jerd.), our Northern one as

CORYDALLA GRISEORUFESCENS, nobis, sp. n.,
the grey-brown upper, and reddish under surfaces being its leading characteristics.

The Indian *Pipastæ* fairly puzzle me. I have a very large series, including specimens from almost every part of India. My friend Mr. Brooks has also some fifty or sixty specimens,

collected chiefly in the Etawah and Cawnpore districts of the North-West Provinces. All our birds appear to belong to one and the same species; no constant difference, however minute, was discoverable: toes and tarsi were more or less elongated and slender, and slight differences were observable in the size and shape of both bills and claws. In colour and in the amount of striation of the upper and spotting of the lower surfaces the most marked differences existed, and there was no single example not connected with others by intermediate forms. There were birds manifestly identical with those described as *Pipastes maculatus* (Hodgs.), with those described as *P. agilis* (Sykes), and, again, those usually referred to *P. arboreus*; but that one and all of these forms were referable to one and the same species appeared to me indisputable. Differences of age, sex, and season will probably be found, when time is made to work out the question, thoroughly to account for the marked individual variations noticeable in this species.

Further, I took nine specimens of *P. arboreus* from England and France, and compared them with our Indian birds. There was no single one of them to which an exact duplicate could not be selected from amongst my Indian series. There were several types of the Indian bird unrepresented amongst the European specimens, but not one of the latter without its *Doppelgänger* (if I may use the term) among the former.

That all our Indian Pipits of the *Pipastes* group, known as *P. agilis*, *P. maculatus*, and *P. arboreus*, ought to be united as one species under the latter, or possibly some older, name, I can now scarcely doubt.

This, however, is not the only difficulty: scarcely any bird can seem more distinct than *Anthus rosaceus* as we get it in its fine summer plumage in the Himalayahs, with its dark green upper surface, rich vinous-coloured throat and upper breast, and bright primrose-yellow axillaries and wing-lining; but this bird in winter plumage is widely different, and I confess that the idea has continually occurred to me, since I have been examining very large series of specimens, that this bird must interbreed with *P. arboreus*. As for differences in shape of bill, and length and strength of tarsus, toes, and claws, these are by no means con-

stant. I have specimens of *A. rosaceus* with legs, toes, and claws as short and stout as any *P. arboreus*, and *P. arboreus* with these same parts as long and slender as any *A. rosaceus*. Again, I have the dark green *A. rosaceus* with the vinous breast and with greyish-white axillaries and wing-lining, and a brown *P. arboreus* with the edge of the wing and lining pale primrose-yellow. Typical examples of both species seem unmistakably distinct; but intermediate forms of the most puzzling character occur of such a nature that it really seems to me impossible to decide to which species they ought to be referred.

I have not, of course, been able to come to any final conclusion on this subject; but I am particularly anxious to know whether this excessive amount of variability which seems to characterize many of our Indian so-called species is equally noticeable in European birds. For instance, are intermediate forms between *P. arboreus* and *A. pratensis* ever met with? or, again, between either of these and *A. obscurus*? Good typical specimens, such as have been sent to me from England, are of course distinct enough. What I wish to learn is whether, with a large series of each from different parts of Europe, intermediate or transitional forms are observable.

Yours truly,

ALLAN O. HUME.

Etawah, December 11, 1869.

SIR,—In my letter to you (Ibis, 1869, pp. 234–237) I find that some corrections are necessary.

The birds I mistook for *Saxicola ænanthe* are certainly *S. saltatrix*, which is the larger bird and of a purer and lighter brownish-grey above; but the great distinction is the colour of the under wing-coverts, which are unspotted white in *S. saltatrix*, and black and white in *S. ænanthe*.

The small bird resembling *Phyllopneuste rama* is a new and good species*. I understand Mr. Hume has given you full particulars of it, for which he had ample materials; for the entire table was covered with specimens of both sorts. I have recently sent Mr. Tristram fresh specimens of each, not skinned, but

* [*Jerdonia agricolaensis*, vide *suprà*, pp. 180–185.—ED.]

preserved with carbolic acid. In these unskinned birds the difference is most apparent.

Phylloscopus brevirostris is a good species, and I was mistaken in thinking it was identical with *P. rufus**. The wings of the latter are much shorter, and the bird is generally much greener than the former; otherwise, they are wonderfully similar in colour, and still more so in song. I often obtain specimens of *P. brevirostris* with little or no yellow under the wings; but as a rule the under wing-coverts are as yellow as those of the Chiffchaff.

My remarks about *Reguloides proregulus* in the same letter apply to *R. viridipennis*. I have since had two specimens of the former from the Himalayas, and I find them to be quite distinct from the bird I get commonly here, which is *R. viridipennis*. Dr. Jerdon's descriptions of the two birds are correct; but the last-named generally has the rump lighter in colour than the rest of the back, sometimes almost yellow; but the light olive of the back is shaded gradually into the lighter rump, not abruptly defined as it is in *R. proregulus*, where the yellow is bright and pure, and the line of demarcation between the olive and that colour is level across the bird's back, the contrast, as I remarked in a former letter, being as strong and decided as the white rump of a Martin or Wheatear. Sometimes the rump of *R. viridipennis* is concolorous with the back, but most of my specimens have that part rather lighter.

Capt. C. R. Cock, of Dhurmsala in the Himalayas, tells me that *Reguloides superciliosus* is very common there at all seasons. He sent me a specimen to prove that he had not mistaken the species. The last time I heard from him he said the bird was still there, though in diminished numbers. I think there is every prospect of getting the eggs of this rare British bird next spring, now that we know one of its summer resorts. I only procured a single bird when I was in Kumaon in the spring of 1868. This species varies much in colour; Mr. Hancock's Hartley specimen (*Ibis*, 1867, p. 252) is, I understand, an unusually brilliant one. He sent me a drawing of it; and I have only one specimen which at all approaches it in vividness of colour. The

* [*Cf. supra*, p. 168.—ED.]

bright birds must be, I think, the young in their first plumage. Towards the spring they have very little of the green and yellow left, as they fade so much owing to sun and weather. A spring-moult to a duller and browner plumage also takes place: whether every bird moults in spring, or only the young ones, I cannot tell; but I have specimens of many small birds as well as of this species undergoing a spring-moult. I have sent Mr. Hancock a specimen of *Phylloscopus viridanus* in which the quill-feathers are being changed. This bird I shot in the spring of the year, and I was struck with the circumstance at the time. As a specimen it was not worth keeping; but it proved that small birds do sometimes moult even quill-feathers in the spring.

In a former letter (*Ibis* 1868, p. 351) I noticed a pale buff Eagle which Mr. Hume and myself thought was the young of *Aquila navia*. I have sent two of these birds to Mr. Tristram, one in the pure buff plumage, and the other in a rich reddish-brown one. That these two are specifically identical is shown by the under surface of the wing, which corresponds in each, as also does the colouring of the primaries; but the wing of the red bird does not agree with that of any other Eagle, so far as I remember. I have lately shot another buff bird, a fine female, which had killed and partly eaten an Egret. In this specimen the cere and feet were deep wax-yellow. I am now sure that this pure buff-and-grey plumage is a perfect one, that of an adult bird, and that this Eagle is quite distinct from *A. navia**.—It is as rare as that is common. I only get one or two in a season; and I could procure a hundred Spotted Eagles, I think, if I wished. The dimensions of the buff Eagle are exactly those of *A. navia*; it is quite as robust, and the sternum of one I examined agrees in form with those of four of that species.

Mr. Blyth remarks (*Ibis*, 1866, p. 233) that the Indian *Neophron* is not *N. percnopterus*, but another species—*N. ginginianus*. The distinction of the dark bill does exist, but only in certain localities in India. When at Delhi the other day I ob-

* [Mr. Tristram informs us that the specimens sent to him by Mr. Brooks certainly belong to *A. navioides*—a species not before recognized as Indian.—ED.]

served that some of these birds had dark bills, others not so dark, and some had light ones. The difference may be due to some peculiarity of climate; that it is specific I do not believe. I shot one bird at Delhi, which has a dark bill and claws, the cere of a deeper colour than the rest of the bare skin, and a few small white feathers on the throat; but had I chosen I could also have procured close to this bird one with a light bill, and a complete representative of our more southern bird; in size, proportion of the wings to tail, and other points these birds vary a little, and in colour of the bill they vary much. I could not procure a black-billed one here at Etawah, nor could I at Almorah, which is much further north than Delhi; but at Delhi the black bills are the rule. The one I shot has a dark bill; but I saw many others with the point of the bill nearly or quite black.

Between this and Delhi there must be a part of the country where light and dark bills will be equally common; and north and west of Delhi there will be a place where the weakly birds with pale bills will never be found. I have no doubt that dark- and light-billed birds will sometimes be found breeding together; a dark-billed male and light-billed female, or *vice versâ*. Mr. Blyth, not having seen dark-billed birds in India, was quite justified in thinking then that our pale-billed bird was of another species. With the aid of a powerful glass I examined every *Neophron* I saw at Delhi; and few indeed had light bills.

I remain, yours faithfully,

W. E. BROOKS.

Glasgow, 4th February, 1870.

SIR,—Having been engaged for some years in the preparation of a work on the Birds of Scotland, I have personally made particular inquiries throughout almost every county regarding the occurrence of the rarer species, and have been rewarded by the acquisition of many facts of interest, which I have no doubt will serve a useful purpose when they are published.

Among birds of this class that have lately come into my hands, I find about half a dozen species that are not mentioned in the last edition of Yarrell's 'British Birds'; and as two of these possess an additional interest from the fact that, being

nearly allied to birds already known as British, they may have been overlooked and are likely to occur again, I beg your permission to put them on record in 'The Ibis.'

Last May, when at Brechin, in Forfarshire, I was fortunate in procuring a specimen of the American Gos-Hawk (*Astur atricapillus*) which had been killed a few months previously by a keeper in the vicinity of Shehallion, in Perthshire. It was sent by him, along with a number of Snow-Buntings and other birds, all recently skinned, to the person from whom I got it; the specimen had been very roughly prepared, as, on afterwards proceeding to relax it, the Glasgow bird-stuffer, whom I employed to mount the skin, found that the brains and eyes had not been removed. This specimen, which is an adult, and apparently a female, is 24·5 in. in length; the wing from flexure measuring 14 inches, and the tail 10·5 in.

The other bird I have at present to refer to is the Green-rumped Tatler (*Totanus chloropygius*), a specimen of which (the sex not ascertained) was shot some years ago by the late William Gordon, of Airdrie, somewhere on the banks of the Clyde, in the higher grounds of Lanarkshire. This bird remained in Mr. Gordon's hands until his death in August last. He had often referred to it as a species which he could not make out, but had never shown it to any one qualified to give an opinion. His entire collection was brought to Glasgow and submitted to me early in September, but was found to contain nothing of consequence except this Sandpiper and a Brown Snipe in winter plumage, killed about the same time and place, which he had been unable to identify. To ordinary observers the Green-rumped Tatler strongly resembles the Wood-Sandpiper (*T. glareola*), differing only from that species in the absence of the white shaft of the first quill, and in having the tail-coverts greenish instead of white. It is possible, therefore, that, like other North-American birds (as for instance the Gos-Hawk just mentioned) bearing a likeness to British species, it may come oftener to this country than collectors are in the mean time aware of.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ROBERT GRAY.

Simla, 14 Feb., 1870.

SIR,—A week ago I received the volume of 'The Ibis' for 1868, and observe that Lieut. Beavan (pp. 496, 497) proposes for the Himalayan race of *Dicrurus longicaudatus* the name of *Buchanga waldeni*. The species thus characterized by my friend is, as you rightly imagine (*loc. cit.* note), my *D. himalayanus* (*tom. cit.* p. 200)—the most common bird that we have in the Himalaya, and abundant at this place and elsewhere.

I am, &c.,

ROBERT C. TYTLER, Col.

SIR,—In a letter addressed to you by Mr. Hume (*anteà*, p. 142) that gentleman announces the existence in India of two species of *yellow-headed* Wagtails. Not having seen the examples on which this statement is founded, I shall not venture an opinion as to its accuracy; but, with your permission, I wish to make the following observations on the general subject:—

1. *Motacilla aureocapilla* is Lesson's title, not Vieillot's.
2. Lesson's diagnosis (*Tr. d'Orn.* p. 422) contains no character inconsistent or conflicting with the characters given by Pallas of *M. citreola*.
3. Lesson gives no measurements.
4. Bonaparte and Mr. G. R. Gray identified *M. aureocapilla*, Lesson, with *M. citreola*, Pallas.
5. Dr. Pucheran, after a critical comparison of Lesson's type-specimens in the Paris Museum (*Arch. du Mus.* vii. p. 377), pronounced it to be the same as *M. citreola*, Pall.
6. An adult male of *M. citreola*, Pall., from the shores of Lake Baikal, in my collection, has the wing 3·5 in. long.

If two distinct specimens of *yellow-headed* Wagtails do inhabit India, it will have to be determined whether either belongs to Pallas's species, and, if either, which of the two. These facts being ascertained, it must then be decided to which of the two Mr. Hodgson's title of *Budytes calcaratus* applies; and if an untitled species remains, it will require a new name. Judging from the length of the wing in Mr. Hume's alleged *B. citreolus* (Pall.), it must be distinct from the Siberian bird,

being less by fully .5 in. ; but, in truth, mere dimensions, except where of fully adult individuals, are not trustworthy data on which to build species.

Yours, &c.,

WALDEN.

Chislehurst, Feb. 17, 1870.

SIR,—The nidification of that noble bird *Mycteria australis* was always a puzzle to me ; for although very common in the North-Western Provinces of India, I could find no notice of its nest or eggs in any work within my reach, and Dr. Jerdon says nothing definite about the latter. I had often seen the birds flying for two or three miles in a direct line towards large trees standing by themselves in the midst of extensive plains of grass near Etawah, and I had as often seen huge nests, apparently 6 feet every way, composed of sticks, on the summits of the said trees, on which the birds alighted, and stood out in bold relief against the sky. During the rains, as it was the season for the breeding of the allied species, I had continually sent men up the trees to reach these nests, but had ever found them empty. The getting at them is no easy matter ; for the sticks of which they are composed are stout, and often prickly, and form a regular *chevaux-de-frise* all around ; while an attack from such a large bird, when poised and scrambling at such a dizzy height, would be no joke. I therefore found difficulty in persuading the stoutest herd-boys to climb to them. However, my perseverance was at last rewarded ; for upon the 27th December, 1867, my man brought me down four eggs, one of them addled, and three with young birds in them, showing how late in the season they incubate. The season had been very hot and dry. This species would appear to lay at most four eggs ; but the general number is three, being 2.7 by 2 inches. In one nest, on the 27th of the same month, I found two young birds, which flew off when disturbed—also, in another, one nearly full-grown on the 24th. I gave my friend Mr. E. Brooks the localities of four or five nests, but no eggs were laid in these, in 1868. He, however, knowing when and where to look, found three more nests, and took from them one, two, and four eggs respectively. He writes to

me that the eggs were "exactly like" that which I gave him, and he adds that he obtained the first in the middle of October, so that those found by me must have been unusually late. The trees are all at some distance from water; but in a country so flooded as that where they are found is, this can be of little consequence to a bird so strong of flight.

I have no doubt but that Ring-tailed Fish-Eagles and other birds use the nests when the young Storks are hatched and flown.

I am, &c.,

C. HORNE.

Innisfail, Upper Norword, Feb. 18, 1870.

Chester Castle, 1st March, 1870.

SIR,—I should like to add a little to the information published by Mr. Allan Hume in regard to the breeding of the Indian Stilt, *Himantopus candidus* (*anteà*, p. 145). When I was in Secunderabad during 1868, Lieut. Feilden told me that in June 1867 he had found this bird breeding around a *jheel* some thirty miles from that place, near the village of Toomulgoodium, on the Masulipatam road, and that he had procured and sent to Europe a considerable number of its eggs. He noticed about twenty nests with eggs on this occasion. In June 1868, not being well enough to go myself, I asked him to visit the spot again; and he did so, but on his return reported that, owing to the excessively hot weather, the *jheel* had dried up to half its size in the preceding year, and that not a single bird of the species was to be seen. I met him last month at his home in England, and he gave me eggs of this bird from this locality, and also eggs of *Lobivanellus goensis*, taken from the same place. As Mr. Hume remarks, there is no difficulty in distinguishing the eggs of the two species. The fact of *H. candidus* breeding one year at this *jheel* near Secunderabad and deserting it the next is singular. Could the disturbance of their nests have caused these birds to change their breeding-quarters?

I hope Mr. Hume will note whether the colony at the Sooltanpoor salt-works breeds there this year.

I am, &c.,

H. W. FEILDEN.

SIR,—In the ‘Record of Zoological Literature’ (v. p. 74) I find the following passage :—

“*Stenopsis candicans*, *S. langsdorffi*, and *S. platyura*, as also *Antrostomus cortapau*, are described as if they were new species; but the first three, though no mention of the fact is made by the author, have been previously described by Mr. Selater, (cf. Zool. Rec. iii. p. 82), and the last is confessedly the same as *A. rutilus*, Burm., Syst. Uebers. ii. p. 385; A. von Pelzeln, Orn. Bras. pp. 12, 13, 49–56.”

Evidently it has escaped the notice of the Recorder that I have mentioned Mr. Selater’s descriptions (*op. cit.* p. 49, note 2). As to *A. cortapau*, I have (p. 55) expressed my opinion that Lichtenstein’s name being published in the ‘Nomenclator Avium’ without any description, it would be appropriate to retain the denomination given by the discoverer of the species—Natterer.

I am, Sir, with the expression of my esteem,

A. VON PELZELN.

Vienna, 8th March, 1870.

[** I very much regret the oversight of which my correspondent with some justice complains; but I think I may plead in excuse the fact that he relegated a reference to Mr. Selater’s prior diagnosis of the species named to a foot-note instead of inserting it in the text.—A. N.]

SIR,—Allow me to call your attention to the fact that my *Pitta kreffti* (Atti della Soc. Ital. Sc. Nat. xii. p. 551) is certainly the same as *P. simillima*, Gould (P. Z. S. 1868, p. 76), the description of which in some unaccountable way escaped my notice.

I remain, Sir, &c.,

T. SALVADORI.

Zoological Museum, Turin, March 9th, 1870.

11 Hanover Square, March 12th, 1870.

SIR,—In Lord Walden’s excellent article on the Sun-birds of the Indian and Australian regions in the last number of ‘The Ibis,’ it is well remarked (p. 35) that there must be some mistake about the habitat of *Æthopyga dabrii* as given by M. Verreaux, namely, “*le nord de la Chine*.” I am fortunately able to confirm Lord Walden’s criticism, and to give the

exact locality of this fine species. The type-specimen of this species was from the collection formed by Msgr. Chauveau on the hills above Ta-tsien-leou, which border the eastern boundary of the Chinese province of Sechnen, and was transmitted by him to M. Dabry, the French Consul at Hankow. This collection, which I had the pleasure of examining shortly after its arrival in Paris, likewise contained the new *Lophophorus lhuysi* and the new *Ithaginis geoffroyi*, also described by M. Verreaux, besides some other remarkable novelties. Some account of it is given in the Bulletin de la Société d'Acclimatation for 1867 (pp. 706-711).

Lord Walden remarks that *Æthopyga dabryi* was likewise obtained by Dr. Anderson in Yunan. As a parallel instance of distribution it may be remarked that in Yunan Dr. Anderson also entered upon the range of *Thaumalea amherstiae*, which, according to Msgr. Chauveau, is very abundant* in the mountains above Ta-tsien-leou.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

P. L. SCLATER.

Dunipace, Falkirk, March 15, 1870.

SIR,—In the admirable paper on the Birds of Turkey, contributed by my friend Capt. Elwes and Mr. T. E. Buckley to the last number of 'The Ibis,' I observe a statement (*antè*, p. 74) respecting the sites of Peregrine Falcons' nests in Scotland with which I cannot concur. I am personally acquainted with a considerable number of such nests, and have been led to a conclusion, as to their position, almost the opposite of the statement in question. In one district alone, irrespective of others, I know of eight nests of *Falco peregrinus*, only two of which are in close proximity to "either the sea or an inland loch;" and of the others the nearest is not less than half a mile removed. I think that the remark of Messrs. Elwes and Buckley must be held as applicable only to certain districts in Scotland, and not to that country as a whole.

I am, &c.,

JOHN HARVIE BROWN.

* Cf. P. Z. S. 10th March, 1870.

SIR,—As very little seems to be known respecting the breeding-habits of the Snowy Owl (*Nyctea nivea*), it may not be entirely without interest to some of your readers if I send you some particulars which I have lately received, together with seven eggs—six from one nest and one from another—from a correspondent at one of the Moravian missionary-stations on the coast of Labrador. The nest, which consists of only a few feathers, is generally placed on a ledge of rock where there is a slight hollow, sufficient to prevent the eggs from rolling out, but sometimes, in the absence of suitable rocks, on the ground. The usual number of the eggs is eight; these are not all laid and brooded at one time, but the first two are often hatched by the time the last is laid, so that you may find in one nest young birds and fresh eggs, and others more or less incubated.

“In the case,” my correspondent says, “of the nest I had the pleasure of finding in this neighbourhood, from which I send you the eggs, I waited till four eggs were laid, and then took the first two I had seen. In a few days two more were added to those left, which former I again took. So long a time passed without more being added, I feared the two eggs I had left would be nearly hatched, and took them away. For a few days the birds remained near, and would probably have laid again, but were disturbed by the Esquimaux.”

I may add that in size the eggs I received are as nearly as possible the same one with the other, and the same also as a single egg I have, obtained through Mr. Duff from Lapland, and that they are a size smaller than the smallest eggs of any clutch of the Eagle Owl in my collection.

I am, Sir, &c.,

HUBERT S. HAWKINS.

Beyton Rectory, March 18th, 1870.

SIR,—I wish to offer a few observations in reply to Dr. Salvadori's letter (*anteà*, pp. 153, 154). With regard to *Larus gelastes*, he cannot possibly have seen the specimen to which I referred; otherwise he could never have stated that a Gull labelled by Prof. Doderlein as obtained in May or June, and suffused

with the brightest rose-colour, was a "*L. ridibundus* in winter dress." At this distance, I cannot attempt to disprove his assertion that the two small Owls in the Museum at Catania are the South-American species *Glaucidium pumilum* and not *G. passerinum*; but, whatever they are, Prof. Zucarelli-Patti, who took them out of the case for my inspection, assured me that seven of them came into his hands in the flesh on one occasion, of which he skinned and mounted the two in question. *Hirundo cahirica* does not seem to have made the same impression on Dr. Salvadori as it did on me, the family being one in which I take a great interest.

It is very satisfactory to learn that specimens of *Francolinus vulgaris*, recently received from Terranova, are in the Museum at Palermo, as, up to February 1869, Prof. Doderlein had certainly not been able to obtain it in the flesh, and, although he maintained that it was still found in Sicily, I could find no one else who did—Cavaliere Luigi Benoit, at Messina, Prof. Zucarelli at Catania, and all sportsmen with whom I conversed agreeing that the bird no longer existed in that island. I certainly flattered myself that, in the event of its turning up at Terranova, I should have been amongst the first to receive direct information from Prof. Doderlein; but up to the present moment he has not written a word on the subject. As Dr. Salvadori has doubtless read Lord Lilford's exhaustive paper (*Ibis*, 1862, pp. 352–356), it is to be regretted that he has not seen fit to give us a few more particulars, unless, indeed, he considers the Francolin so common in Sicily that the dates and localities of capture are not worth mentioning.

I remain, &c.,

HOWARD SAUNDERS.

London, 21st March, 1870.

[*.* As Dr. Salvadori's letter appeared in print, we think we are in duty bound to insert the whole of Mr. Saunders's; but justice to the former compels us to say that he subsequently wrote to us, asking us to withdraw the passage relating to *Larus gelastes*. Unfortunately his letter did not reach us in time to enable us to comply with his wish.—ED.]

London, 28th March, 1870.

SIR,—When in Paris last week, I observed in the Garden of the Société d'Acclimatation two Guinea-fowls, which, upon examination, appear to me to be undescribed, and I therefore wish to bring the species to which they belong before ornithologists as

NUMIDA VERREAUXI.

N. capite cristato intense nigro; gula rubra, collo cæruleo, regione ophthalmica nigra; cinctu collari pectoreque nigris, hoc castaneo tineto, corpore reliquo nigro cærulescenti-viridi punctato: remigibus nigris: 5o., 6o., et 7o. albo-fimbriatis.

Long. tot. 22, alæ 10, caudæ 6, rostri 1, tarsi 1·75 unc.

Hab. Natal.

Head with a full, long, upright, jet-black crest, as in *N. cristata*, the rest with the face bare. Black about the eyes, sides and back of neck light blue, and throat, from the base of the bill to the feathers of the breast, bright red. The skin of the neck full behind, forming a plait about midway, and falling in a kind of fold over the feathers of the lower part. Lower part of the neck behind, and upper part of breast, black, having a rich chestnut tint on the breast. Rest of the plumage black, thickly spotted with light bluish-green. Wings spotted like the body; primaries dark brown; secondaries black, with their inner webs spotted; outer webs of the first four, with the exception of a narrow line along the shaft, white; outer web of the rest unspotted, black, with lines of bluish-green running their entire length, as though the spots had become confluent. Tip of tail black, the spots being almost obsolete. Thighs black. Bill light horn-colour. Legs and feet black. There is no difference in the plumage of the sexes.

This species is nearest to *N. cristata*, but presents various differences distinguishing it therefrom. The black on the breast is much more extensive, and the red throat is very conspicuous in the living bird; and the form of the plait and fold of the skin of the neck would seem to distinguish it from all its allies. The first example was brought to France by the late M. Edouard Verreaux, and is now in the Paris Museum. This, as well as the other specimens subsequently received, came from

Natal. My friend M. Jules Verreaux, after whom I have great pleasure in naming this species, also met it during his first voyage to Natal in the year 1827. It appeared to keep in small flocks, of from seven to eight individuals, always remaining in the bushes that bordered the rivers, and was very wild, so much so, in fact, that during the several journeys which he made into the interior, he was never able to procure more than three specimens, which unfortunately were lost with all his other large collections by shipwreck on the coast of France, on his return in 1840.

I am, &c.,

D. G. ELLIOT.

SIR,—I should like to mention in ‘The Ibis’ that I have just received from my friend Mr. Brooks a pair of *Sylvia melanopogon*, Temminck—*Amnicola melanopogon*, Gerbe (Orn. Eur. i. p. 527), shot at Etawah in the North-western Provinces of India, an entirely new locality for this rare warbler, of which I never before saw but the single example obtained on my expedition to Palestine (P. Z. S. 1864, p. 438; Ibis, 1867, p. 77).

I am, &c.,

H. B. TRISTRAM.

The meaning and derivation of the word “lag” in the common English name for *Anser ferus* has long been a puzzle to most people, and we are fortunate in being able to give what we believe to be its true signification. With this we have been kindly favoured by so great an authority on early English as Mr. Skeat. The adjective “lag” means originally late, last, or slow, whence we have “laggard” and “laglast,” a loiterer, “lagman,” the last man, “lagteeth,” the posterior molar or wisdom-teeth (as the last to make their appearance), and “lagclock,” a clock that is behind time. Accordingly the Grey Lag Goose is the Grey Goose which, in former days, *lagged* behind the others to breed in our fens, as it now does on the Sutherland lochs, when its congeners had betaken themselves to their more northern summer-quarters. This solution of an old difficulty will, we think, be considered no less satisfactory than simple.

It is with very great regret that we have to announce to our readers the death of a frequent and valued contributor to our pages, Mr. ROBERT CECIL BEAVAN, Lieutenant in the

Bengal Staff Corps. After nearly ten years' service in India, he returned to England in the spring of 1867 on sick leave; but his health improving, he sought and obtained the appointment of Zoologist to the Abyssinian Expedition, then preparing (Ibis, 1868, p. 134). A relapse, however, compelled him to forego this much-desired chance of distinguishing himself, and he passed many months of suffering at home, which he again quitted for India in the autumn of 1868. Arrived there, he was in hopes of procuring a post in the Forest Department, which would have given him excellent opportunities of continuing the zoological observations and studies to which he was so strongly attached; but unfortunately his malady increased, and, notwithstanding a visit to the Himalayas, he was once more sent home as an invalid, when he died at sea on the 3rd of February last, at the early age of *twenty-nine*. We have still in hand the manuscript of the concluding portion of his 'Notes on Various Indian Birds,' which we hope shortly to publish, for none can read the papers contributed by him to this journal without recognizing in them the work of a true naturalist; and the loss of so promising a labourer in the field of Indian Ornithology will be deplored by all.

Though we have far exceeded our prescribed limits, the energy of our contributors is such, that there yet remains to us a great mass of papers the publication of which has for the present to be deferred. A large number of ornithological works also, some of much more than ordinary interest and excellence, still require notices, notwithstanding the space devoted to that branch of our labours in this and our preceding Number. Nor is the activity of ornithologists likely to be soon diminished; in this country alone we hear that a work of unusual importance is contemplated by two of our friends, whose competency for their self-imposed task will be fully recognized by all as soon as the scope of the publication and the names of its authors are announced, while a new edition of Yarrell's 'British Birds' (the standard authority on the ornithology of these islands) is said not only to be in preparation, but its commencement likely to see the light about the close of the present year.